

Guyana’s UN ambassador enters race for secretary-general

AFP, Georgetown

Guyana has nominated its ambassador to the United Nations to run for secretary-general of the global body, the president of the South American nation announced late Friday.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of Portugal will step down at the end of the year from the post he has held since 2017, after two terms.

Carolyn Rodrigues-Burkett has been Guyana’s representative to the UN since 2020. The Atlantic coastal nation tucked between Venezuela and Brazil has a population of fewer than one million people.

“Ambassador Rodrigues-Burkett’s vision for the United Nations centers on strengthening multilateralism, enhancing effectiveness and responsiveness of the organization, promoting inclusive global governance and ensuring the United Nations remains capable of addressing contemporary challenges,” Guyana President Irfaan Ali said in a broadcast.



PHOTO: PMO

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman plants a sapling along the bank of the Patali canal in PM-khali union of Cox’s Bazar Sadar upazila yesterday after inaugurating its re-excavation project. The initiative is part of the government’s key electoral pledge to protect the environment and strengthen climate resilience through nationwide excavation and re-excavation of rivers, canals, and water bodies.

Pro-poor schemes to get less than 40%

FROM PAGE 1

For the upcoming fiscal year, the number has been brought down to 90 and will be reduced even more in the coming years.

Only pensions for low-income employees are shown in the safety net budget, said finance ministry officials.

In the upcoming fiscal year, Tk 56,229 crore has been allocated for pro-poor programmes, which is less than the allocations for agricultural subsidies and pension benefits.

“The main objective of the safety net is to support the poor and vulnerable people – from that perspective, including the benefits given to pensioners in the safety net budget is not justifiable in any way,” said Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modelling.

Similarly, showing agricultural subsidies under the safety net budget is also inappropriate, he said.

The government is setting aside Tk 144,338 crore in the next fiscal year’s programme for social safety net schemes, up 13.89 percent year-on-year, with about 9.7 percent of the sum going towards the BNP’s flagship Family Card programme.

Fiscal 2026-27’s social safety net allocation is 2.1 percent of GDP and around 15.39 percent of the proposed budget. This year, 2.02 percent of GDP or 16.04 percent of the budget went towards the social safety net.

Of the 90 programmes, 48 will be categorised as pro-poor, with allocations of just over Tk 56,229 crore. This fiscal year, there are 38 such programmes with allocations of Tk 39,000 crore.

The Family Card programme will get Tk 14,500 crore and cover 41 lakh

households.

Those selected for the Family Card programme cannot be beneficiaries of other social safety net programmes.

To prevent duplication of beneficiaries, the finance ministry and the social welfare ministry are implementing the Dynamic Social Registry, a database containing the names, addresses and contact information of beneficiaries.

About Tk 1,400 crore will go towards the distribution of 42.5 lakh Farmers’ Card, another flagship programme of the BNP. Each beneficiary would receive a yearly payment of Tk 2,500.

As many as 16,513 victims from the July uprising would get allowances ranging from Tk 10,000 to Tk 20,000 every month based on three categories of injury, while the families of 844 July martyrs would receive Tk 20,000 every month as honorariums.

Allocation will also be given for monthly honorariums and festival allowances to religious leaders of different faiths, one of the election pledges of the BNP to promote religious and social harmony.

The programme will have 2.6 lakh beneficiaries next fiscal year, including imams, muezzins, khadems, priests, monks and caretakers of temples, churches and monasteries.

A new programme under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) scheme will provide cash equivalent to 110,000 tonnes of rice to 15 lakh poor working people under an integrated policy.

Another programme will provide 15,000 unemployed workers with a monthly allowance of Tk 5,000 for up to three months, which will cost about Tk 25 crore.

Among the existing programmes,

the number of beneficiaries of old-age and widow allowances is being increased by 100,000 each, and the allowance is being raised by Tk 50 to Tk 700 per month. Currently, 61 lakh people receive old-age allowance and 29 lakh receive widow allowance.

The disability allowance is being increased by Tk 100 to reach Tk 1,000 per month. On the other hand, the number of beneficiaries is being increased by about 250,000 to 38 lakh.

The education allowance for students with disabilities is being increased from Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,400.

In addition, the number of beneficiaries under the mother and child support programme is being increased by more than 100,000. However, the allowance remains at Tk 850.

In the upcoming budget, the allocation for financial assistance in the treatment of serious diseases like cancer, kidney and liver ailments will be increased to Tk 700 crore, and the maximum assistance may rise to Tk 1 lakh from the existing Tk 50 thousand.

For freedom fighters, the number of beneficiaries and allowances will remain the same, but only the categories of Bir Shreshtha, Bir Uttam, Bir Bikram and Bir Protik will see their allowances increase by Tk 5,000.

Currently, these allowances range from Tk 20,000 to Tk 35,000 per month. At present, 589 individuals across the four categories receive allowances.

“The next fiscal year’s social safety net programme appears more expansive than transformative. It recognises many of the right problems: fragmentation, targeting errors, urban gaps, ageing, climate

vulnerability and weak linkage with employment,” Raihan said.

But the proposed solution still depends heavily on administrative reform within a system that remains spread across many ministries and programmes.

“The next fiscal year’s programme is therefore a useful step, but not yet a decisive break from the old model.”

Its success will depend less on the announcement of new cards and more on targeting integrity, benefit adequacy, fiscal protection and the political willingness to make social protection a right rather than a favour, said Raihan, also a professor at the University of Dhaka’s economics department.

“The existing social protection system in the country is neither sufficiently responsive to contemporary needs nor sustainable in the long term,” said Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury in his budget speech.

The BNP-led government is committed to establishing a humane, equitable and social protection framework founded on dignity under which the state will play a responsible role in safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of all citizens, he said.

In this regard, programmes will be implemented following a life-cycle approach, ensuring that every stage of a citizen’s life from birth onwards is brought within the ambit of the social protection system.

“Guided by the core philosophy of our government’s social protection framework ‘Economic empowerment and self-reliance’, we are committed to ensuring the economic freedom and empowerment of every citizen,” Khosru added.

When history

FROM PAGE 1

The former, for all the romance of that tournament, were passengers in their own moment – resilient and rode their luck. The own goal was their story because they did not have another to tell.

Their 2026 version, on the other hand, have a different narrative arc. The scale of this win becomes clear when their opponents are considered.

Paraguay did not arrive in Los Angeles as pushovers but with real pedigree, having taken points off Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay during qualifying. Yet, Mauricio Pochettino’s side made them look ordinary. Rather than retreating into a defensive shell after the opening gift, the hosts oozed in confidence and smelled blood. They piled on wave after wave of attacks.

Folarin Balogun was at the centre of it. After having an earlier effort ruled out for offside, the Monaco forward converted a Pulisic cross in the 30th minute before skipping past the Paraguayan defense to curl a beautiful second strike into the top corner on the cusp of halftime.

By the interval, the home side looked every bit a team ready to embrace the weight of expectation. Pulisic’s early withdrawal for injury precaution slightly reduced their direct threat, but their structure remained intact, eventually restricting their southern neighbours to only two shots on target.

Paraguay, however, finally offered a threat, with Julio Enciso setting up substitute Mauricio to pull one back in the 72nd minute. But any sense of momentum was quickly extinguished as Giovanni Reyna added the finishing touch in stoppage time, coming off the bench to pull off a flamboyant trivela finish into the far corner to seal a 4-1 drubbing.

In 1994, the USA needed fortune to announce themselves. This time, they delivered a definitive statement of intent. The difference is no longer fortune, but control.

Mob beats man to death in Barguna

Police say victim hacked panel chairman, who opposed drug trade

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pattuakhali

A man was beaten to death by a mob after he allegedly hacked a union parishad panel chairman for opposing drug trafficking in Barguna’s Sadar upazila on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Ibrahim Hossain Kalu, 35, alleged leader of a group known locally as “Kalu Bahini” and a resident of Dema village in Badarkhali union, police said.

The incident took place around 5:30pm on Friday in Chamily Bazar area under Badarkhali union, said Barguna Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Abdul Alim today.

OC Abdul Alim said Golam Mostafa, a member and panel chairman of Badarkhali Union Parishad, had an altercation with Ibrahim Kalu, a suspected drug trader, for allegedly opposing his involvement in drug trafficking and other criminal activities in Badarkhali union and surrounding areas.

On Friday afternoon, Kalu and his associates attacked Mostafa with sharp weapons centring the earlier issue, leaving him critically injured.

Mostafa was first taken to Barguna General Hospital and later shifted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal as his condition deteriorated, he said.

The attack sparked outrage among local residents. Shortly afterwards, angry locals allegedly caught Kalu and one of his associates, Tawhid, and beat them.

After being informed, police rushed to the scene, rescued the two, and took them to Barguna General Hospital, where doctors declared Kalu dead, said the OC.

Tawhid, who sustained serious injuries, was referred to Barishal for advanced treatment.

Opposition trying to create unrest over budget

FROM PAGE 1

“Bangladesh is an agriculture-based country. But at the same time, we must build industries and expand trade. If industries and businesses grow, employment opportunities will be created for our young people. They will be able to find jobs and engage in business activities,” he said.

The PM said the government has increased taxes on imported products that compete with locally manufactured goods to protect domestic industries.

“We have included such measures in this budget. Even this is not acceptable to the opposition,” he said.

Tarique said the people, not any political party or family, are the true owners of the country.

“I want to say that you are the owners of this country. No political party is the owner of the country; no family is the owner of the country. The owners of the country are its 20-crore people,” he said.

Before addressing the gathering, the PM formally launched the canal re-excavation work by digging soil with a spade and planting a sapling on the canal bank.

Highlighting the significance of the canal restoration project, he said re-excavating canals across the country would help boost agricultural production, improve water management and benefit rural communities.

Tarique said BNP believes in politics for the welfare of the people and that his government has already started implementing various election pledges to improve the lives of ordinary citizens.

Outcry as cops assault

FROM PAGE 1

Club’s final Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League (DPCL) fixture in Savar.

According to the cricketer, he arrived in Chattogram on a delayed flight and was travelling home in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw when a few policemen stopped the vehicle near the Lalkhan Bazar flyover at around 11:25 pm.

Nayeem alleged that officers acted aggressively from the outset and physically assaulted him despite his cooperation and identification.

“I told them, ‘You can check my bag if needed.’ One of the officers grabbed me by the throat and forced me into their vehicle.”

The 26-year-old said he managed to get out and questioned the officers, but the situation escalated further.

“I asked them why they were grabbing me by the throat. After that, they continued assaulting and harassing me. Later, many people recognised me, and I showed them my ID card, but they still kept beating me,” he further alleged.

Videos of the incident spread rapidly on social media, drawing criticism from fans and the sporting community.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), Cricketers’ Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB), and several national cricketers demanded a fair investigation and action against those responsible.

BCB strongly condemned what it called “unacceptable and inappropriate conduct” towards a national team player. CWAB also termed the incident “unacceptable for any citizen” and pledged full support for Nayeem, who has played 14 Tests for Bangladesh, taking 48 wickets since his national debut in 2018.

Bangladesh T20I captain Litton Das expressed support via Facebook,

He said the government has introduced initiatives such as the Family Card and Farmers’ Card programmes to support low-income families and farmers.

“We are standing beside farmers. We are standing beside ordinary people. Every commitment we made before the election is being implemented step by step,” he said.

The PM also formally inaugurated a nationwide programme to plant 25 crore trees over the next five years, aiming to strengthen environmental protection and address the impacts of climate change.

He inaugurated the programme, as promised in its electoral manifesto, by planting a Garjan sapling at Malumghat Reserved Forest in Dulahazara under PM Khali Union around 2:55pm.

In the afternoon, Tarique visited the grave of Wasim Akram, a martyr of the 2024 July uprising, in Cox’s Bazar’s Pekua. He offered feteiha there, said PM’s Additional Press Secretary Atikur Rahman Rumon.

Wasim, a second-year student at Chattogram College and a member of the Chhatra Dal’s college unit, was killed on July 16, 2024, during clashes between protesters and police in Chattogram.

Later, the PM met Wasim’s family members and enquired about their wellbeing. As a gesture of support, he handed over savings certificates worth Tk 20 lakh to his mother.

Tarique, along with his wife Zubaida Rahman, also visited Dulahazara Safari Park in Cox’s Bazar during his daylong tour of the district.

writing: “Keep your head high, Nayeem. You are a wonderful person,” adding that no citizen, let alone a national cricketer, deserved such treatment.

Meanwhile, the Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) responded swiftly, suspending two officers – sub-inspector Md Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan and constable Md Rasel Chowdhury – and expressing regret over the incident.

The CMP apologised for the incident. Late last night, it also withdrew Khulshi OC Arif.

CMP commissioner Shawkat Ali visited Nayeem’s residence, announced a three-member investigation committee, and said departmental proceedings would be initiated against the accused officers, stressing responsibility for any unprofessional conduct rested with the individuals involved.

Later, speaking in Chattogram yesterday, Nayeem thanked supporters and locals who gathered at the scene and accompanied him to the police station.

“When they put me into the CNG, I was very frightened. If the 100 to 120 supporters and local people had not been present, the incident could have turned out differently.

“I would especially like to thank them. When the police took me to Khulshi Police Station, I appealed to them. The supporters also came from Lalkhan Bazar to the police station with me that night.”

Nayeem, who has 300 first-class wickets to his credit, added that he had already taken steps to avoid such incidents in future and was willing to cooperate with any lawful search.

He is part of the squad for the upcoming Test against Zimbabwe in Harare starting June 28.

FROM PAGE 1

Ahead of World No Tobacco Day this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) said global nicotine pouch sales exceeded 23 billion units in 2024, with the fastest growth observed among adolescents and young adults.

The UN health agency has also warned that aggressive marketing strategies – including flavoured variants, social media campaigns and influencer endorsements – are driving youth exposure to nicotine products.

According to WHO experts, nicotine exposure during adolescence can impair brain development, affecting learning, attention and impulse control, while significantly increasing the risk of long-term dependence.

“The use of nicotine pouches is spreading rapidly, while regulation struggles to keep pace,” the WHO Tobacco Free Initiative said in a recent report, urging governments to strengthen taxation, advertising restrictions and youth access controls.

The Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance (BATA) and the Bangladesh Network for Tobacco Tax Policy (BNTTP) have criticised the budget proposal, arguing that it risks opening the door to wider commercialisation of products they believe should be tightly regulated or prohibited.

They argued that the move departs from earlier tobacco control amendments proposed under the interim government, which reportedly included stricter restrictions on emerging nicotine products, and may be inconsistent with Bangladesh’s obligations under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Aggressive marketing strategies – including flavoured variants, social media campaigns and influencer endorsements – are driving youth exposure to nicotine products.

Experts at World Health Organization

Barrister Nishat Mahmood, member-secretary of the Public Health Lawyers Network, said nicotine pouches are highly addictive and pose significant risks to brain development, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

“Their adverse health effects are comparable to, or potentially greater than, those of conventional cigarettes.”

Furthermore, empirical research suggests that the revenue generated from tobacco products is substantially outweighed by the associated healthcare costs and productivity losses, she added.

“Several countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Russia, have imposed complete